

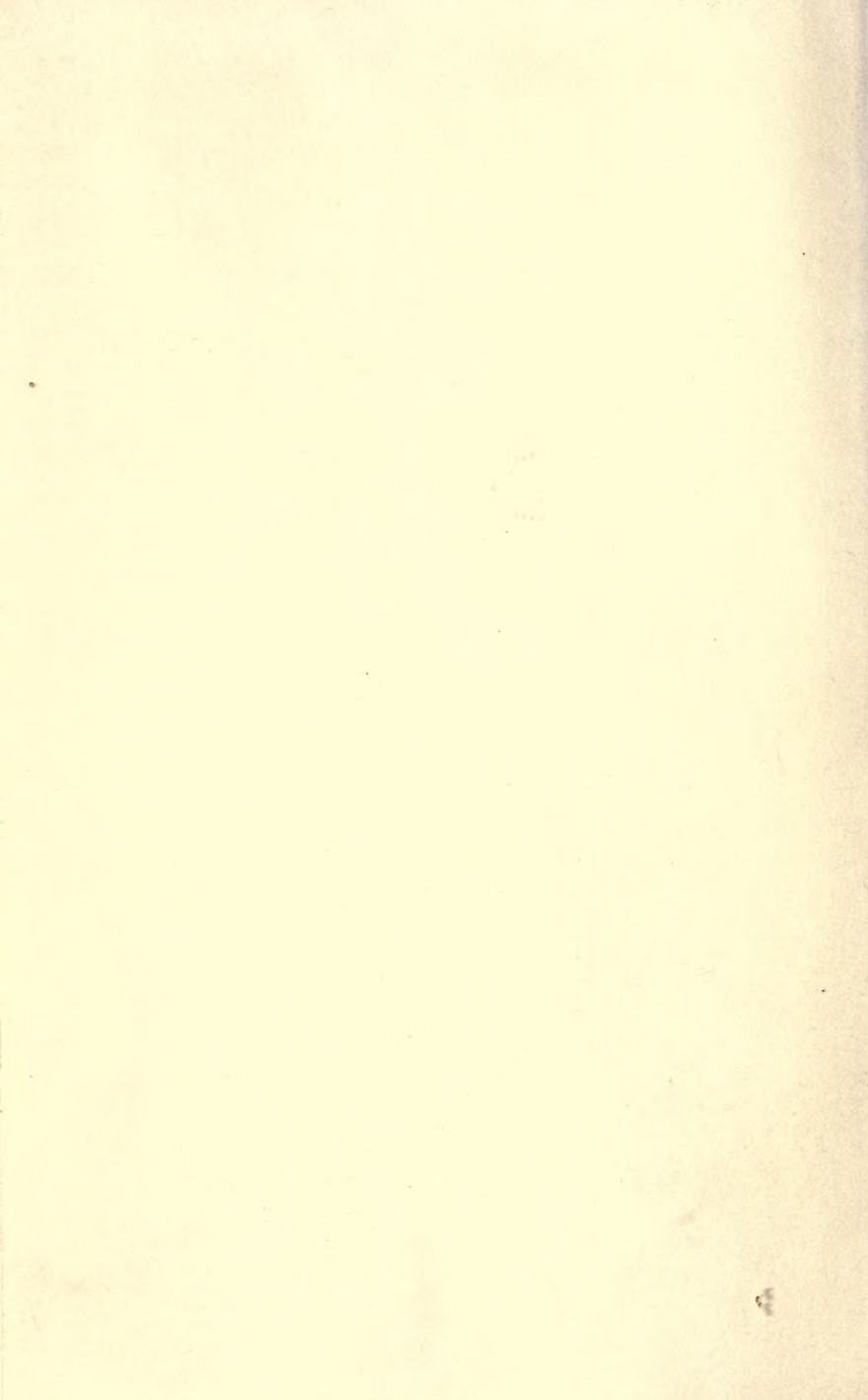
The · Veteran

· And · Other · Poems ·



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Hamilton Wigle



DEAR BROTHER,

In presenting a copy of "The Veteran and Other Poems" to the Superannuated and Super-numerary Ministers of Canada and Newfoundland, I am well aware the majority of the poems are so local in character and so colloquial in composition that they will be of little interest to the reader.

So many kind things, however, have been said about the poem, "When I go up to Conference," that I thought it might "stir up your pure mind by way of remembrance," and refresh your memory with reminiscences of the long and faithful service you have rendered Christ and His Church.

If this little volume contributes anything to your comfort or pleasure, just take it as a desire on the part of the author and giver to remember the "Veterans" of our Church, and to acknowledge the strong bond of Brotherhood that unites our great Methodist Ministry.

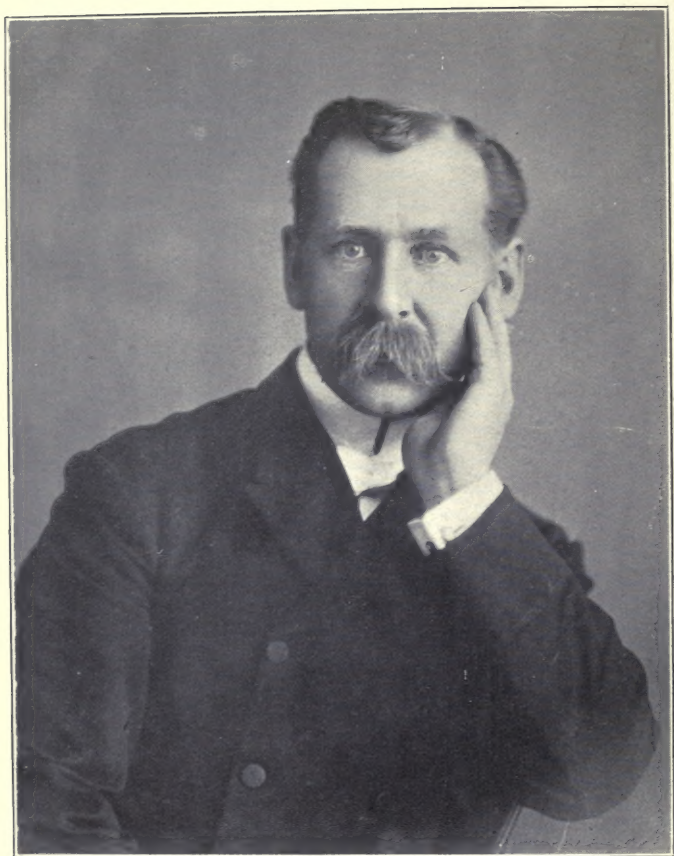
Yours in His service,

HAMILTON WIGLE.

Amherst, N.S.

Xmas, 1911.

The Veteran and Other Poems



James C. Long

Hamilton Wright

THE VETERAN

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

Hamilton Wigle

Pastor of Zion Methodist Church, Winnipeg



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1910

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DEDICATED

TO

MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

PEARL IRENE, RUBY MILDRED, OPAL PAULINE

GARNET HAMILTON

JUST as the ancient rocks caught
the fleeing gold dust, and held
it for the use of man, so I
wonder if it is not a part of the
poet's work to catch the inarticulate
whispers of the great OVERSOUL,
and crystallize them into an imperish-
able form, so that they, like the gold
dust, may fill the double service of
utility and embellishment.

This book is a feeble effort to
accomplish this desideratum.

H. W.

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The Veteran and Other Poems

The Veteran

*The life story of J— T—, Winnipeg,
Veteran of 1870-1.*

I TELL you what, dear Parson,
This world seems all askew;
I feel so broken-hearted,
I don't know what to do.
If I attend your meetin's,
Or go to mid-week prayer,
The people all will shy me;
I don't feel welcome there.
No person rubs agin' me,
Or says, Hello, old chum!
They don't find me a-gamblin',
Nor touchin' vice or rum.
I guess they smell the grub-house,
Or it's how my garments look,
That makes the people shun me,
And treat me like a crook.
I haven't changed inside, though;
My heart is just as good
As when I had some money
To buy my clothes and food.
My arm is mighty stiff now;
This hand was crushed, you see.
My knee won't bend as it used to;
I'm gettin' up a tree.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

So when I see these patches,
Or scan these battered hands,
And view this tremblin' body,
That's tramped o'er many lands,
I hardly know myself, but
Fancy I've been asleep,
Or lived for half a cent'ry
On some wild mountain steep.
My life seems like a day-dream,
As I trudge about the town.
The beggar's lot I'm havin'—
On ev'ry side turned down.
But what's the use of mournin'?
I'm on the world's hard rack;
I'll keep right on a-goin',
And drop dead in my track.
Big diff. 'twixt you and me, Sir,—
You sittin' in your chair,
Your children on the lawn there,
Your wife so sweet and fair;
But let me tell you, Parson,
This dead old soul once knew
The bliss and joy of home-life
I see surroundin' you.
I'll tell you of my hist'ry;
Your face seems sort of kind;
I seldom show my heart-chest;
I almost always find
That some deep-rooted mem'ry
Has caught on fire anew,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And my long seated sorrow
Will burn me through and through.
A wife? O yes, I had one;
She kept my soul alive;
And children, too, we had them,—
All angels they,—just five.
We gloated on the prospect
Of that domestic fold,
'Cause we'd have them to help us,
When wife and I got old.
They grow'd and crow'd and chippered,
And laughed and played and cried;
But home seemed broke and empty,
When two took ill and died.
Diphtheria came upon us,
And smote our little fold,
And ere ten days had vanished,
Two lambs lay stiff and cold.
You mind I was a soldier,
Of England's rifle corps!
They held us then for duty,
To serve on land or shore.
And so in seventy-one, Sir,
The call came clear and shrill:
"The Indians kill the settlers."
The cry was, "Louis Riel!"
I fought, and once was captured:
I knew when Scott was shot,
And thought that, any moment,
I'd share the selfsame lot.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

But when the war was over,
I struck for Montreal,
Like ev'ry homesick seaman,
When leaves in autumn fall.
Alas! my home was broken!
Gone was my dream of life,
For in the stranger's corner
The city had laid my wife.
My blood burned through my sinews,
My brain ran wild and throbbed;
I felt a sense of horror,
I swore, I prayed, I sobbed.
I cursed the cruel warfare;
I loathed the bitter call
That tore me from my loved ones,
And robbed me of them all.
I said the country owed me
At least a quiet nook,
Beside some lonely hillside
Or by some little brook,
Where I could house my children,
And plant my wife's cold clay,
And, maybe, heal my heartache,
And drain my tears away.
And that is why I say, Sir,
This world ain't hardly square.
I fought for home and country,
And do you think it's fair
That I am on the street now,
Without a friend or sou?—

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

My country's clean forgot me—
I think it's hard, don't you?
Some time ago, you mind, Sir,
You asked the new M.P.
If he could get a pension
Or some slight annual fee;
But when he reached the "High House,"
With all his friends, you see,
And settled in his mansion,
He thought no more of me.
O yes, I found the children;
I thought their hearts would break.
"Poor mamma's grave," said they,
"Is marked out by a stake."
Up o'er the hill I followed,
Heart-broken and half dead,
And found the plot for strangers:
"She's there somewhere," they said.
Through grass and weeds and thistles
They led me for a while,
My soul aflame with anguish,
Each step seemed like a mile.
Just then I stumbled forward,
A mound lay at my feet;
My breath shut off, I staggered,
And read the name—"Marguerite."

• • • • •

I could not bear to stay there,
But felt I must go West.
I took the boys to "Ambrose,"
I reckoned that was best.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I pressed them to my bosom,
And rocked them to and fro,
I told them how I loved them,
And left them years ago.
They told me how their mother
Had tucked them in the bed,
And how she kissed and covered
Each sleepy little head.
And that she sang so sweetly,
And read them stories old,
And how she prayed the Saviour
Would keep them in His fold.
This photo here's her picture;
'Tis faded bad, I know;
It's gettin' all the dearer
As seasons come and go.
I've sold all I possess, Sir,
To keep me warm and fed;
No man will get this treasure,
Till someone finds me dead.
O yes, the boys kept growin';
I saw them now and then;
They looked so fine and handsome,
And comin' most to men,
When fever caught the eldest,
And soon the work was done;
He hit the trail for mother,
And I was left with one.
Ah, fates! And then the other
Was workin' in the cut,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

A-pickin' up the boulders
In the centre of the rut;
Just then the reckless foreman
Turned on the fatal spark,
The dynamite explosion
Sent Bob out in the dark.
They gathered up the fragments,
And said his grave was there,
But when I went to search it
I couldn't find just where.
I found his box and blankets,
His mother's Bible, too,
And that's my life's sad story;
To me it's mighty blue.
This world has no attraction;
I don't ask much of it,
The more I try, the harder,
It seems, I'm gettin' hit.
Is there a God, do you think?
Or is it all a fake?
It seems to me, just now,
The world spells one word—*fate*.
O, some small joy I have, though,
But only in my dream,
When those I've lost stand near me,
And with their hands they seem
To rub these stiffened fingers,
And fondle me as of yore,
And then I think I'm roamin'
On some far-distant shore.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Another joy I catch, too,
When passin' some bright home,
On long and sleepless marches,
Is I roam, and roam, and roam.
When I can't raise a nickel,
Not e'en the ten-cent bunk,
So I walk to keep from freezin',
Or shift like a common drunk.
Yes, right out there, my Parson,
In front of your own door,
I've watched your playful youngsters,
A-tumblin on the floor.
I've stood with smartin' frost-bites,
My stomach gnawin' for bread;
I felt like askin' tickets,
To get a meal and bed;
But I'd got used to hunger,
And freezin' was company,
Then on I passed like a slave
Who'll never more be free.
I'm tired, yes, I confess;
And needin' a meal or two.
My eyes for sleep are burnin':
I hate to be askin' you.
I won't need many orders,
Soon this "old vet." will fall.
I think the Gen'ral's comin',
Some night I'll hear him call.
You speak to me of Heaven:
Do you think they'd let me stay,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And give me food and shelter,
Without a cent to pay?
I wish I had an order
To pass me through the gate,
So I could get a corner
If I should happen late.
The Saviour? Yes, I guess so—
And trust Him, did you say?
That sounds like my dear mother;
She taught me how to pray.
I've not been much at churches,
But fought a lot of foes.
I hope your great Commander
Will sort of interpose,
And see that when the rations
Are served out over there,
This poor, sad, worn-out vet'ran
Will get what's just and fair.
The people I have fought for
Are rollin' now in gold,
And I'm a friendless pauper,
Homeless, thin-clad and old.
While they drink wine at banquets,
And sleep on eider-down,
I eat dry bread at lodgin's
With toughs around the town.
I've cost the country little,—
They'll bury me, I trust,
They'll burn my musty clothin',
The soil will eat my dust.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Then p'r'aps I'll see my children,
And hear my wife's sweet song,—
But there, excuse me, Parson,
I'm keepin' you too long.
This order'll bring them to me,
They'll gather round my bed;
They seem to come much nearer
With a place to lay my head.
If you should take my fun'ral,
And wish to speak of me,
Just say I was a soldier,
And won some victory;
But war with leaden bullets
A-whizzin' round my head,
Turned out to be as nothin'
To the fight I've had for BREAD.

The Flowers

THE sun is climbing up the hill;
The ice-fields soon will he distill;
And all the sunny slopes he'll fill
 With flowers.

The heat will travel on the breeze;
The saps will saturate the trees;
The fields will fill with buzzing bees
 And flowers.

The soil will mellow for the grain;
The vines will stretch to catch the rain;
And there will be o'er all the plain
 Bright flowers.

The little children then will play;
And dear old Grandma, too, will stay,
Throughout the long and balmy day,
 Among the flowers.

The Children

THERE'S papa coming up the street!
Let me go, too, in my bare feet.
Guess he's got something nice for tea.
Here! wait for Buster, now, Marie!

Well, wife, how's home? O.K., old girl?
Is your head in a perfect whirl?
Put up those lips, love; here, take this—
There's a whole world of condensed bliss.

And how're the children? I suppose
They've burnt their fingers, torn their clothes.
Great Scott! no supper? nothing made?—
I guess that means a "Ladies' Aid."

Where is Buster? Hello there! say!
What's *my* young man been doing all day?
Bring my slippers, that's a dear child.
Here, drop that cat; don't act so wild.
Quit your scrapping; that ain't right.
My! you kids are a perfect fright!

Did you say the baby's hurt?
Guess he's been playing in the dirt.
Swallowed a nail! for Heaven's sake!
Hammer his back; give him a shake;
Send for the doctor; my! my! my!

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Cough, child, cough! spit! mercy! he'll die!
There, it's out! good, good! there, poor dear!
Put back your little head, right here.
All over now, love; there, there, angel pet.
Nasty thing all gone; all better; don't fret.
Go to sleep; shut those eyes; don't cry;
Mamma'll wipe the tears all dry.

Be careful, child, don't drag on me.
Sit still, now, or get off my knee.
You love me, do you? O, that's sweet!
Be careful where you put those feet.
Just see those shoes! and see my dress!
Can't you play without all that mess?
Sleepy, eh? Guess it's time for bed.
Heavy eyes, pulling down the head.
You want your toys? O, not to-night.
Just hug your sister good and tight.

Sit around right; don't tilt your chair.
Watch that light, say! brush back your hair.
Who made that mark there on the wall?
Be careful, now; don't let that dish fall.
Shut the door; don't have to be told.
You never think about the cold.

Ev'ryone off to bed, skip, trot.
Now, Buster, get in your own cot.
O dear! so tired you can't walk up?
A drink? Bob, get his little cup.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

That's not your nightie; the other.
Say your prayers; I'll fix the cover.
"If I should die," go on, all through.
"Bless papa, mamma, and uncle, too."
Move over, Nell; make room for Bess.
Yes! all right; I'll fix dolly's dress.
More covers? I'll tuck them in tight.
Good-night, bairnies; good-night—
 Good-night!

The Old Engineer

I'VE emptied many a can of oil,
And breathed up barr'ls of steam;
A quarter-century honest toil
I've put at the iron beam.

I've had the steam go through my shirt,
And soak me to the skin;
I've carried home both grease and dirt,
Enough to fill a bin.

The engine's rocked me to and fro;
I love her rhythmic song;
I'd open up and let her go,
When the road was straight and long.

Yes, many times I've pulled in late;
The frost was on the rail.
She couldn't hold her reg'lar gait,
And pick up all the mail.

The rain? Well, you just bet;
It pelted on my face.
With clothes and cabin soaking wet,
I'd set the storm a pace.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Dark? As black as Egypt's witch.
But for the lightning's flash
I'd never see a blooming switch
In many a midnight dash.

And snow? It seemed like mountain slides.
'Twould drift the cuts brim-full,
And pack around the engine's sides
Until she couldn't pull.

I've driv'n her into many a bank
Until she'd jump the track;
And wedged between the snow and tank,
I couldn't get her back.

And cold? Well, there the fights begin.
You try your lever thrice;
You can't get off, the wheels just spin,
The steam turns into ice.

The winds will chill the fire-box,
The track gets like a rink;
You're like a ship at equinox;
You daren't say what you think.

The engine spits and fumes and stews,
And tries her best to go;
She bends her piston, burns her flues,
And flounders in the snow.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Smashes? No, never had a pitch.
Hit some cows, shoved some rails,
And threw some hand-cars in the ditch;
Explained a few details.

Yes, I've worn six engines, thereabout,
On that old iron track.
Some day I'll take a new one out,
And may not bring her back.

Been good? I know the preachers' line;
They fire off hot air;
But they don't know this life of mine;
They think I never care.

D'you think I've done it all for fun?
Or just to get the dross?
I've often felt some Higher One
Was my Superior Boss.

I've watched the ties upon the road,
When lives were in the car;
I felt if I should wreck my load,
They'd meet me at the bar.

I've pulled all kinds of foreign folk,
And Dukes and Princes, too.
While they would eat or sleep or smoke,
I cut the dark in two.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I've filled my orders, every one,
And sort of hoped all through;
And kind of fancy, when I'm done,
I'll be rewarded, too.

Last call? I won't be hard to wake,
And trust 'twill be all right,
If the Sup'rintendent says, to take
The SPECIAL home to-night.

The Twenty-Fourth of May

IN all the year there's no such day
As dear old twenty-fourth of May.
How I did want that morn to come,
So I could sort of let up some!
For since the winter passed away,
We'd worked like Trojans ev'ry day.
For when the sugar-makin' stops,
We then start puttin' in the crops.
And when that day *did* come about,
'Most ev'rybody started out
To visit, play, or celebrate,
To plant some trees or decorate.
Then father'd set the milk pails down,
And say, "You lads can hike for town;
But first," said he, "let out the stock,
Lay down the bars, turn in the flock.
That clover field's a perfect mass,
So let the cattle on the grass.
The herd's been bawlin' all through May,
So let them in the fields to-day."

I jerked the horses' halters off,
And let them gallop to the trough.
Right in the tub, you bet, I goes,
And jumps inside my Sunday clothes.
Then down the stairs and out the doors,
That day no more confounded chores;

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I'd roam the pastures where, I knew,
The buttercups and daisies grew ;
And lots of nests I often found
Among the trees and on the ground.
I'd watch the little gapin' brood,
And give them dirt instead of food.
I'd lubber round upon the grass,
And count the swallows as they'd pass.
By ev'ry stump and stone and tree
Were lazy toads a-watchin' me.
Old Nature, too, caught on the day,
And put her winter clothes away.
"Don't shear your sheep," the farmers said,
"Till May the twenty-fourth has fled,
Nor change your underwear just yet,
The weather may be cold and wet.
But plant your corn and other grains,
To get the June soft, soakin' rains."
You feel you now can trust the air ;
Till then it may be foul or fair.
The birds, they, too, seem settled like,
And frogs are hoppin' on the pike.
The sun quits foolin' with the cold,
And makes the winds do as they're told.
He stops his squintin' all around,
And comes right out to warm the ground.
He rolls his sleeves, takes off his vest,
And clears the sky from east to west.
Then we had picnics in the grove ;
Some came on foot, while others drove.
The whole community was out,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

A-chattin', strollin' all about.
The horses, hitched against the breeze,
Were eatin' branches off the trees.
The lads and lasses, I'll be bound,
Were just the finest could be found.
One girl wore scarlet, one wore blue,
And one had ribbons on her shoe.
But O, the sweetest girl of all,
She let me hold her parasol.
That twenty-fourth I liked her ways,
She set the pace for other days.
The twenty-fourth just seemed to me
The greatest day I'd ever see,
For down the road a little girl
Was fixin' up her flaxen curl.
I asked her at the singin' class,
If I could whistle as I pass;
She smiled and said, "I'll look for you
Soon after nine, if that will do."
My heart swelled up, my vest got tight,—
I'm sure I rose nine feet in height.
'Twould be the rapture of my life
If I could make that girl my wife.
Next mornin', when I struck the line
That took me past that girl of mine,
The sky was thick with buzzin' bees,
A-suckin' honey from the trees.
I wished my ears could gather sound
To hear their music all year round.
The breeze blew perfume up my nose,
And apple-bloom fell on my clothes;

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And I could take a bill of fare
On that sweet-scented, balmy air.
I felt like catchin' up a ray
So I could lengthen out that day.

Some twenty years since that has fled;
That pretty girl?—Well, she has wed.
Another fellow caught her eye;
She took her pick,—It wasn't I.
But things have changed some, I'll be bound,
Since first those holidays came round.
For now Victoria's long been dead,
And yet the nation well has said:
"We'll keep that day we so admire,
In honor of our grand Empire."
While then we loved the bonfire blaze,
The fireworks are now the craze.
We finished then with fading light,
But now the fun keeps up all night.
The shootin' rockets pierce the sky,
And let their pearls and rubies fly,
As polished gems high in the air,
Which fall like snowflakes everywhere.
With flags and guns and songs galore,
We celebrate from shore to shore.
On ev'ry breeze the echoes sound,
For Britain's one the wide world round.
We bivouac at this camp-fire
To glorify our great Empire.
See here, old Time,—cut any day!
But leave to me *this one in May.*

The Sparrow

You husky little sparrow,
Flirting with the snow!
You never plow nor harrow,
Neither do you sow.

And yet you're fat and sporty,
Gleaning from the street,
While scratching like two-forty
For your bread and meat.

You'd thrive up in the Arctics,
Where the walrus feeds,
And find your little attics
In the glacier weeds.

But say! how do you keep warm
In your chilly nest?
How can you endure the storm
In your scanty vest?

Who tucks you in, these cold nights?
Don't you need more clothes?
How do you heal the frost-bites
On your tiny toes?

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

There's Someone kind and tender,
Keeps your bosom hot.
Your little frame so slender
Calls for special thought.

You seem so like a brother,
Living 'neath my roof.
Could we but know each other,
We'd not keep aloof.

But it doesn't seem quite fair,
If we brothers be,—
I live like a millionaire,
You in poverty.

That cold crevice isn't snug;
You seem chilled all through.
You'd be welcome on my rug,
And your family, too.

I wish I knew your secret.
Do you really know?
Is that all there is in it?
Flitting to and fro?

I'm busy sermon-making,
Pointing out the good.
Is all your undertaking
Just to find your food?

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Surely there's an order sweet,
Whispered in your ear.
There is sure a service meet,
You can render here.

Or why spend all your seasons
Where the snowflakes grow?
You could find mild regions
Where the blue-birds go.

Or do you prove that precept,
By a Rabbi taught:
Those who God and good accept
Never are forgot?

I've measured stars and spaces,
Read the Koran through.
I've studied tribes and races,
Books of nature, too,

But a shroud of mystery
Circles you around;
Somehow I can't get near thee,
Nor your deepness sound.

If you own *my Master*, too,
I'll this message tell:
He who keepeth me and you
Doeth all things well.

Gideon Swain

(A Tribute.)

*For twenty-five years train-caller at the C. P. R. depot,
Winnipeg.*

THEY tell me 'twas in eighty-four
You first began to call;
So then for twenty years or more
You trod the station hall.

I heard you first in ninety-two,
Announcing ev'ry train.
I saw old people go to you,
And ask you to explain

Just why the train was so much late,
And if you thought their son
Would yonder at the station wait,
And if they'd best get on.

I saw the little children, too,
Look right up in your face;
They gazed at you as if they knew
Your heart was full of grace.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And there were women by the score
Who'd come to meet their men;
They'd half a dozen kids or more,
And parcels, nine or ten.

'Twas then, brave soul, you won my heart,
And won those women, too;
The way you acted out your part
Is written up to you.

For how you helped those mothers get
Their babies on the train,
And all your kindness, I think, yet
Some recompense you'll gain.

And many chubby little arms
Embraced you for their Dad;
While your soft words quelled all alarms
Of many a timid lad.

Your beaming face and tender grace
Won hosts of friends for you—
Of settlers in the land-rush race,
When ev'rything was new.

They tell me you have ceased to call;
Your voice has lost its chord;
That you no longer make the hall
Re-echo with your word.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I hear you're waiting for a train
That takes the settlers East;
To that gold-paved, love-lit domain
Where pensions are increased.

I hope, when that express comes through,
You'll be there with your pack,
And may the "Con." then say to you,
"We'll take the *upper* track."

Halley's Comet

A COMET's coming right this way,
About ten million miles a day,
And it will reach us, so they say,
Sometime in June.

It's rushing now through boundless space,
Like some wild scout in stellar race;
'Twill graze the sun in its mad pace
Sometime in June.

It started out one misty morn,
When roving comets first were born;
'Twill pass again our earth forlorn
Sometime in June.

What weird romance is in its flight,
Through maze of worlds with mantle bright;
And we shall bask in its soft light
Sometime in June.

Its trip, in years, takes most four score;
Its course must touch some far-off shore;
We'll see it once and then no more,
Sometime in June.

When I Go Up to Conf'rence

Old Chums.

WHEN I go up to Conf'rence, I look 'round to see the
lads
Whom I bumped against at school, or were 'mongst
my college grads.
I go right up and punch them, or I greet them with
a clap;
I call them by their nick-name and I say, "Hello, old
chap."
I look up in their faces, and I see the dear old eye
That burned in my affection in the days of long gone
by.
When I hear them wield the sledge in the field of
sharp debate,
They don't seem like the same mild lads who scribbled
on my slate.
But when they plead for students or some Super-
annuate,
I recognize the fellows who had helped their college-
mate.

The Aged.

When I go up to Conf'rence, I observe the heads of
grey
Who bore the heat of battle though they didn't get
their pay.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

They have marks to show their service wasn't just to
"mind the stuff";
They served upon the frontier, where the fight was
wild and rough.
Sometimes I see the shadow of the conflict in their
face;
Sometimes they glow with rapture of anticipated
grace.

The Bereaved.

When I go up to Conf'rence, I most always find some
soul
Who's had a bitter struggle, had to pay some heavy
toll.
Amongst the fun'ral's on the field, in the parsonage
was one,
For the fever scourged the town and it took his
eldest son.
Then his wife collapsed with grief (all her friends
were in the East);
The hail had cut the sal'ry and the doctor's bills
increased.
And the brother almost broke, with his noble spirit
stunned,
When Conf'rence coolly voted: "Claimant on Con-
tingent Fund."

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

The Coming Men.

When I go up to Conf'rence, I look out for coming
men,
Where sparks of pith and power show some genius
now and then.
And I watch the plodder, too, who grows bigger every
year,
And sits behind the fellows who would rather speak
than hear.
Then I lean across the aisle to a brother in the pew:
"Who's that man," I inquire, "sitting just ahead of
you?"
"That is Joshua J.," he says; "he has got a lift this
June.
Quite a coming man, they say, he'll be in the city
soon.
He can gather in the crowds; he can make the socials
hum;
And by what the people say, will be heard in time
to come."
So I rummage all around, the entire group I scan,
Till I settle on the one that *I think's* the coming man.
He's a plain, unpretentious sort of awkward-looking
chap,
Who'll burn with indignation and may fly off like a
trap;
But he's full of high ide'ls and has sympathy to burn;
He won't envy other fellows, but will do the Christian
turn.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I can see him thinking harder, breathing deeper every
year;
I can see his spirit growing, catching visions wide and
clear.
You won't see him croon and cower round the mem-
bers in the chair,
Or coquetting with the laymen, pulling wires every-
where.
He'll invest his mind and heart in the welfare of the
place,
And he soon will find access to their confidence and
grace.
He is working up his circuit with such steady even
plod
That the people tell him plainly he was stationed
there by God.
Seems to me that's building right, putting sure
foundations down,
And some coming Conf'rence June he'll be stationed
in the town.

The Indian Missionaries.

When I go up to Conf'rence, there's another class I
find,
With a kind of far-off look and a pensive turn of
mind;
Close communion they have held with the red men all
the while;
They show the long seclusion with a class who seldom
smile.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

When I see those gallant souls who instruct the
Indian race,

I detect a look of pathos, sort of ling'ring in their
face;

For they serve an aimless people, with less sentiment
than thought;

If they ever had a culture it is well-nigh all forgot.

Put me out in Sz-Chuan or the streets of Tokio—

Among the dark-souled Indian is a diff'rent place to
go.

I could feel in far Corea or the cities of Japan,

Thrills of great and strong empires, filling out
Jehovah's plan;

But to sit by dying embers of a people fading fast,

And to try to kindle fires out of ashes of the past,

Is a diff'rent work indeed, and I often want to ask,—

Can you stand the isolation in your sacrificing task?

I understand their lonesomeness in their slow and sombre
toil,

On a people, not a nation, but a tribe upon the soil.

You wardens of the northland rounding up the copper
men:

To think of situations where you fellows might have
been—

My heart-strings break their latchet, and my soul goes
out to you

In your long and lonely vigils in a life where noth-
ing's new.

All along your bleak, cold tread, with your huskies
and your sled,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Only moonbeams for your lamp, and the hemlock for
your bed ;
I can see you building fires in the scrub beside the
trail,
On your way to Norway House, hungry for your win-
ter's mail.
Keep your camp-fires burning bright, guard the souls
on your reserve,
The Commissioner's coming, and you'll get what you
deserve.
Some day you'll come to Conf'rence, it will be your
last trip down ;
They may bring you in a box to the border of the
town.
There the guides will chant a requiem and let down
the precious pack ;
You'll be at the Gen'ral Conf'rence, and we won't
expect you back.

The Laymen.

When I go up to Conf'rence, all the laymen I survey ;
Never truer, nobler set filled assembly halls than they.
Some old farmers, whisker-faced, have been here since
eighty-two ;
They located in the land when the settlements were
new.
Yet these wind-tanned brawny men carry courage in
their face,—
The pioneers of progress, scions of a royal race.
It was to their humble home that the missionary went,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And they took him to their heart, as the man whom
God had sent.

After supper and the chores, when the wind was howl-
ing round,

There they sat counting sections, mapping out the
preacher's ground.

With the babies in the bunk, and the oil lamp burn-
ing low,

They made no reservations and their heart strings all
let go.

For the exiled wife had hid some deep secrets in her
breast;

She had told her husband some, but had buried all the
rest.

In this atmosphere of joy her restraint had melted
down,

And she sobbed out all her grief she had borne with-
out a frown.

She told how years were ages when they first came on
the plain;

And had hungered, O so oft, just to see her home
again.

In hopeless expectation she had hardened to her care:
But now they'd got the Gospel, 'twouldn't be so hard
to bear.

They sang old Rock of Ages and read the ninetieth
psalm;

The angels hovered round them and they felt a
heavenly calm.

The prairie filled with people; there were churches on
the trail;

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

The settlers were converted at the old communion
rail.
This was the vision splendid that unfurled before
their sight,
As they raised the fam'ly altar, formed anew that
holy rite.
These are the men, I tell you, who are building up the
land,
And it makes me thrill all over when I shake them by
the hand.

The Recruits.

When I go up to Conf'rence, I am always glad to hear
That a band of loyal fellows have enlisted through the
year.
How I love to view the faces of the sturdy little band,
Who came from old Ontario or the far-off Mother-
land.
They've done some Wild West riding out upon the
frontier bold;
They've wallowed through the snowdrifts and have
fought the biting cold;
They've broken long deep furrows where the settle-
ments abound;
They've urged their faithful cayuse to the rancher's
herding ground;
With saddles and their buckboards they have mired
in the sloo;
They've slept upon the prairie—there was nothing
else to do;

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

In coonskins and their jumpers they have skimmed
the prairie o'er,
Driving forty miles a day, preaching thrice and often
more.
Who knows the desolation of a storm-swept, snow-clad
plain,
Where tracks and trails die round you like the ship-
path on the main?
You lads who've burned the yule logs in the homes
across the sea,
Where mother taught the Scriptures at her bedside or
her knee,
You're paying big subscriptions to our church out in
the West,
In facing these conditions and devoting her your best.
You're the men who've had romance, all the long,
long Conf'rence year;
You could furnish thrilling scenes that would raise a
laugh or tear.
Never mind, my faithful lads, you are making heart
and soul;
May some fields of large stipends be your well-
deservèd goal.

In Memoriam.

When I go up to Conf'rence, I most always miss some-
one;
The roll-call tells the story that a brother's term is
done.
In memorial service joined, our last fun'ral rites we
blend,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

When the Chairman calls the hymn, in remembrance
of the dead:—

“Give me the wings of faith to rise within the veil
and see”—

The solemn tones subdue us like heaven’s minstrelsy.

“Once they were mourners here below and poured out
cries and tears”—

All earthly ties were broken now that bound us
through the years.

“I ask them whence their vict’ry came; they, with
united breath,

Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb, their triumph to
His death.”

The streams of tender mem’ries flowed and ev’ry eye
was dim;

Many brethren rose to pay loving tributes unto him.

Finale.

This glorious Christian Conf’rence is the shadow of
the Cross;

The result of fire-testing, it’s the gold without the
dross.

It’s an alabaster box of two thousand years of
prayers;

The grain of centuries’ sowing in the fields once
strewn with tares.

There’s another Conf’rence meet, when the sister
churches, too,

Will join the great Assembly in Jerusalem the new.

We’ve lived in expectation of this universal call,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And preached the Resurrection, quoting largely from
St. Paul;
We've talked of 'Lijah's chariot, told of writing on
the wall;
Said humanity was wrecked by the great ancestral
fall;
We have worked and wept and prayed, we have gar-
risoned the velt;
In our fellowship of toil what a rapture we have felt!
But the glory at the altar where we've captured some
recruits
Is nothing to the gladness when we'll gather all the
fruits.
Ah! my brethren, let me tell what will sweeten all
the past
Is to hear the Master whisper, "*Labor ended, home
at last.*"
If we're carried from the pulpit by the laymen's ten-
der hands,
While the death dew gathers on us like a mist from
distant lands,
He'll pronounce the benediction when our last long
sermon's o'er,
While we greet old congregations on the blest eternal
shore,
The chariots and the horses will conduct us safe along,
Through the sky, beyond the clouds, 'mid the roll of
angelsong;
There'll be gleams of light about, and the heav'ns will
open then,
And we'll hear unnumbered hosts pealing forth the
great Amen.

Portage la Prairie

(The Emerald City.)

On the occasion of the Conference of June, 1909.

WHAT a beautiful spot of nature on the fringe of our
domain,
Like an emerald in a pendant is your setting on the
plain;
Full ten thousand stately maples cast their shadows
past your door,
And the lovely long-limbed elms can be counted by
the score;
In the bosoms of the seasons they've been nourished
through the years;
They have heard the calls of springtime as she whis-
pered in their ears.
By the long sequestered inlet with its fringe of green
so nigh,
There the shy and skimming swallow searches for the
unwary fly.
We have heard your night hawks whirring, as they
swooped down through the air,
We have heard your robins singing in the tree-tops
everywhere.
We have seen your green-girt gardens and your
spacious flower-flecked lawns,

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

We have seen your golden sun-sets and the far-flung
radiant dawns.
If it wasn't sin to envy, could we steal your lovely
town,
We would float it down the river to the "Peg," and
plant it down.
You have loaned to us your hearth-stones; we have
broken of your bread;
We have supped the cup of friendship; we have had
the prophet's bed;
You may keep our songs and speeches, and our
prayers and sermons too,
But we'll carry away from Conference tender
memories of you;
We shall stow away some fragrance from your lilacs
in the grove,
And we'll cherish sweet remembrance of our fellow-
ship of love.

The Bums

WE'RE on the bum, so give us rum,
Or we won't leave to-night.
Say! old chum, let's make things hum,
And clean this place outright.

We've played the game of sin and shame,
And paid the price for crime.
We've lost our fame, disgraced our name;
We've had a roaring time.

See here, let's go; this gait's too slow.
Button your coat, old pal,
Our pile is low; you bet we know
How to make a new haul.

We're out for a lark, and we love the dark;
It's better for us than day.
We'll light a spark, to hide our mark,
And leave the Devil to pay.

We've been in the jug, and sat on the rug:
Where haven't we been, old toad?
We've slept with the slug, and rode with the
"bug,"
We've seen the whole of the road.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

The end? you say; you think it won't pay?
O! quit that crying now.

Keep up, old jay; don't start to pray;
You've long forgotten how.

Going? surely not. Does your head feel hot?
Good Heavens! not dying?

Wake up, old sot; see what I've got:
This stuff's worth trying.

You want a light? You've got a fright.
Mother? pardon? sin?

My God! what a sight! he's in the last fight!
Poor Dan's all in! All in!

Dauphin

O DAUPHIN! Prince of the Northland!
Namesake of thine Orient sire:
On thy fertile soil let me stand
And speak of thy growing empire.

Strong scion in nature's embrace!
New sprung from the bosom of earth,
How charming thy well-moulded face,
Beaming with freshness and mirth!

You resemble an elk at bay,
A strong yet timorous creature;
New link 'twixt the art of to-day
And the simple hand of nature.

How tender thy parents and kind
To cradle thee under the hills
Which hold back the frosts and the wind,
Till the harvest thy gran'ry fills!

Those sheltering mountains near by,
How they check the blizzards that blow!
How they lift up the storms on high
And sift down the snowflakes below.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

How cosy and snugly you dwell
In the cove of your crescent-wood!
Once filled with the red man's yell,
Where the bison and elk have stood.

On your forest at ev'ning glows
The sun like an ocean of gold,
And sifting through to the windows,
Illumes your perennial fold.

I'm charmed with your shy Vermilion,
Meandering about your feet:
How she hides her stream from vision
In her coverts of dark retreat!

There I tracked the restless rabbit,
And discovered his patted lair;
There I watched the owl's strange habit,
As he flopped through the frosty air.

Your park is an ideal grove,
'Tis a dream of sequestered bliss,
Where primitive foxes still rove
And nature has left her sweet kiss.

What scenes of inviting romance!
Could listening branches but talk!
There trees half hide the shy glances
Of lovers in their ev'ning walk.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Your homes are large and well ordered ;
Your streets are well graded and clean ;
Your lawns are splendidly bordered
With elms and evergreen.

Your people are bright and hopeful,
You evidently mean to stay ;
The land all round you is fruitful,
And you shall be famous some day.

The Birds

FAR in the south and sunny lands
The birds are forming tribal bands
Obeying instinct's firm demands;—
Yes, they're coming.

I hear them singing in the air;
I see them swarming ev'rywhere,
All restless for their long repair;—
Yes, they're coming.

And soon o'er all our wide domain
We'll hear their voices once again
In their sweet southern soft refrain;—
Yes, they're coming.

Across the nation's bound'ry mark,
The robin and the meadow lark
Will be the first ones to embark;—
Yes, they're coming.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

They then by millions will be seen
To spread like locusts on the green,
Where fields of snow so long have been;—
Yes, they're coming.

And then they'll nestle in the grass,
And lay their eggs where cattle pass,
And chant for us a daily mass;—
Yes, they're coming.

To Robert

THEY tell me, Bob, you're failing some,
And showing signs of years.
The news has almost struck me dumb,
And filled my eyes with tears.

Cheer up, brave lad, let mem'ry range;
Catch echoes on the wing;
And let old sights and seasons change
Your autumn into spring.

Just think you're in Alumni Hall,
Or at the Alley-board;
Or that you heard some Freshie fall,
And how the Sophies roared.

We've drunk your kegs of cider, Bob;
We've played you cruel tricks.
Your chicken-roosts we used to rob,
And poke your bees with sticks.

We dragged the calf from farmer's stall,
And hauled the beast upstairs.
We hanged the cats in Science Hall,
And hooked your plums and pears.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And yet you never squealed on us.
You pacified the Prof;
And when the Board would make a fuss,
You'd work to get us off.

"Don't mind them, sirs; they're lads," says you;
And thus their wrath you quelled.
And many times you pulled us through
When we'd have been expelled.

You couldn't work the calculus,
Nor trigonometry;
But you could teach the whole of us
What men at heart should be.

So sit you down right here, old friend,
And let your mem'ry dream.
A thousand boys will e'er defend
The man of the old régime.

Of dear "Old Vic." there's not a son
But's waiting just to show
Acknowledgment of kindness done
In days of long ago.

You've seen the hood and ermine fall
On hundreds of the lads.
You've played your part to put us all
To reach the state of grads.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

And yet *you* never have been decked
With any hood or gown
To mark degrees of high respect
You earned in Cobourg town.

But wait, I tell you when, brave soul,
The Dean of Heaven's school
Shall call the fellows on the roll
To kneel upon the stool,

We'll swing you into line that day;
You'll get your ermine, too;
"A crown of life," I think He'll say,
"Is coming now to *you*."

Winnipeg, Man.

Rapid City

Coy city of the golden west,
Of passing beauty well possest,
With charming homes thou dost abound,
Which scan the view for miles around.

Your fine broad streets slope up the hill,
And down the bank out toward the mill,
The children play and lovers meet
In cloistered dells of shy retreat.

How calm you lie at eventide,
The S'katchewan flowing by your side;
Your verdant hills rise grand and high
And stand like guards against the sky;

While in the deep wide plain between
Is one great scroll of dappled green;
The valley up, the valley down,
Hums back the echo of the town.

The sun streams in, the clouds float high,
The stars beam bright through the inky sky;
With instinct common here below
You've settled where the waters flow.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

The silver stream looks like a thread
In a silken garment far outspread,
The gleeful crews float to and fro
Where once the Indian used to row.

How diff'rent from the rustic past
When buffaloes, driven by the blast,
Sought shelter in these quiet coves,
Or spread the valley by the droves.

The red man's reign so, too, is done ;
His age is past, his race is run ;
The white man's plough has crossed his track,
And civilization has driven him back.

In gazing on your lovely town
A million years come rolling down,
And ask me how the stages ran,
From ice to fish, wild beast to man.

For in the days of long ago
When all this land was ice and snow,
The melting mountains cut defiles,
And pushed their stream a thousand miles.

This dream of ages lures me back ;
I love to trace the strenuous track ;
For now I see the steel-clad train,
Where once the sea gulls skimmed the main.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

You're in a rich and fertile belt,
The wealthiest village on the velt.
Your sweet seclusion from the plains,
Your source of growth and wealth explains.

Just hold your prospects good and tight;
Your isolation means your might;
With dams and mills and shafts and power,
You've the opportunity of the hour.

Goderich

I STOOD on the bank at ev'ning,
And looked far away in the West,
Where the sun was slowly setting
Far over Lake Huron's blue crest.

On the brow of this stately hill
Stood Goderich, so proud and so high,
The air was transparent and still
As the day went hurrying by.

Up over the hill was beaming
The sun's last bright evening ray;
While all the spires were gleaming
At the close of an autumn day.

MAITLAND RIVER.

And there ran the Maitland River
Full a hundred paces below;
Its waters, shining like silver,
Were calm and serene in their flow.

Then I looked on the farther bank,
My eye spanned the mighty ravine,
Where the thirsty cattle oft drank
By the little islands so green.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I traced the bend of the river,
My eye swept the curve of the hill,
Sighting the fields of the farmer,
Who hears its perennial rill.

On the point are vines and flowers
And towering maples and pine,
Shading the beautiful bowers
That Attrill has furnished so fine.

On the bank my eyes can follow
The meandering railroad track;
It winds about in the hollow,
All the way from the station back.

HARBOR.

I stood on the edge of the park;
I felt like a king on a throne.
The steamer just looked like a bark,
I wished for a tongue not my own.

It seemed like a step to Heaven,
It looked like a million down.
I prayed that the power be given
To picture this beautiful town.

Below lay the sheltered harbor,
'Neath the shade of the "Maitland Hills."
Clear and unmoved was its water,
Supplying the big Harbor Mills.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Then I looked far out on the piers,
Where the dark, angry billows foam;
They've weathered the tempest for years,
To furnish the vessels a home.

Around these old bulwarks of stone
The furious waves have been cast,
While over the tempest have flown
The gulls in the midst of the blast.

SUNSET.

What a gust of that fresh'ning air
Came pouring in over the main!
I breathed it so bracing and rare,
And it quickened my tardy brain.

Then I caught at the setting sun;
And I reached for the deep blue sky;
As yet my work was not half done,
And the day was hurrying by.

Could I hold the elements still,
I would paint the scene in a breath,
As an artist displays his skill
On the smile of a face in death.

The sun was now almost immersed
In the lake, as it slowly sank,
And the last bright gleams that dispersed
Seemed to fall on the Maitland bank.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I felt I could sit on her brow,
So gentle and so calm she lay;
Amazingly different now
From her burning heat of mid-day.

I gazed at the gleam on the wave,
And looked far away on the sight,
How the gold-tinted waters did lave,
As they tossed to and fro in the light!

The fleecy crimson clouds hung near
To celebrate the setting sun
Which was so soon to disappear,
For the day was almost done.

Then each fleece transferred its tinge
To illuminate all the rest.
Each dropped its golden-tinted fringe
Over a saffron-colored crest.

God will summon His host, thought I,
As I looked on the glorious sight,
To view from their seats in the sky
The sun on its setting to-night.

FINALE.

'Twas dark. The night had come,
My muse had slipped away.
I turned my feet toward home,
For my work was done that day.

The Paper Boy

"DID you hear that step on the porch, John?"
Said my wife with a nervous snap.
"The paper-boy, I guess, and he's gone,"
Said I, "so take your morning nap."

And then I took to thinking, how strange!
For years I've found my paper there;
I've never seen that boy on his range,
Yet he comes, whether foul or fair.

'Tis a dreadful day for such a sprite
To battle with this frost and snow;
They said, when I left the store last night,
That the bulb marked forty below.

Not a wave of heat nor a foot-warm
Does he get on his lonesome beat,
But flits like a bird in a wind-storm
From this house to that on the street.

For homes on his route are all latched, and
He'd freeze on his path and be dead,
Ere children their slumber had slackened,
Or parents had stirred from their bed.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

I wondered just what did he look like,
Was he young, was he thin and small?
His name, was it Jim, Tom, perhaps Mike?
And did some misfortune befall?

I vowed that boy I surely would find,
And gather some facts if I might;
For he leaves no more traces behind
Than ships that sail past in the night.

I got his name and his home I found.
Such a spectacle met my eye:
There were seven youngsters running round,
And fifty duds hung up to dry.

A worried mother came to open
The frost-bound, steam-soaked, squeaky door,
And ere a dozen words were spoken,
I counted all their earthly store.

By the stove was a sight that froze me;
For there I saw a bright-eyed chap,
With twisted limbs and back all humpy,
Holding an infant on his lap.

And near the window, in a chair, sat
A Grandma, with her ball of yarn.
The children played about her foot-mat,
Each handing her their socks to darn.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

“ You’ve a little boy,” said I, “ lady,
Who carries papers, I believe;
You’ve quite a task to get him ready,
Soon after five he’d have to leave.”

“ ’E’s called, you see, hat ’alf past four, sir;
’Is clothes iss piled with bag on top;
’Is lamp-warmed cup is downed like sither,
’Is dad’s away to camp to chop.

“ We ’elp ’im, though, for Granny, dear, mends;
That lad can stitch ’iss bag and toque;
The rest do chores and I halways sends
The lass to ’elp ’im with ’iss book.

“ We’re not so poor; but for the car-strike
We’d ’ad this cottage halmost clear.
For months dad never touched a ’andspike,
An’ that ’as put us back a year.

“ ’E does it cheerful, no ’e don’t grouse;
’E says ’e’ll keep apounding sand
Till ’e pays the cost on this ’ere ’ouse,
An’ puts the deed in mother’s ’ands.”

Souris

SHE is fine and fair, when you once get there;
For she doesn't show up at first.
But just like the hare, from his secret lair,
She comes with a sudden burst.

By the river green, where it winds between
The banks, so deep and so wide,
Through the grand ravine, are the dwellings seen,
And over the far hill-side.

'Tis a lovely sight, in the inky night,
To look down into that dell;
And to see the light, in the windows bright,
Where the cloistered people dwell.

Your river is clear but half of the year;
The rest 'tis a seam of ice.
But the funniest gear, without a peer,
Is that bridge of strange device.

When you step on it you feel you're off it;
It tips right up toward the sky;
Then it takes a new fit and drops down a bit,
And acts like it's going to fly.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

It jiggles and joggles. It wimbles and wabbles.
It's like a balloon on sand.
It's caused some troubles. The town's had squabbles
With this airship on the land.

Improve your fine town. Pull your old shops down.
Take your rough fences away.
Keep your streets well mown and your lawns well
sown.
A touch of taste will repay.

Your schools appear well, and your churches tell
Of a tone of moral worth;
But your drink dispel; it savors of hell:
It's the moral blight of earth.

For people that drink and buildings that sink
Soon fall in the nation's strife.
But minds that can think and walls that won't shrink
Have the stamp of immortal life.

The Convict

(Written while passing the Penitentiary at Stoney Mountain, Manitoba.)

WATCHED by armed prison-guards,
Kept like lions in a cage,
Walled in barricaded yards,
Seems to me a gross outrage.

Hardened feelings may be found,
Deadened conscience there may be;
Hopes and prospects may be drowned,—
Just a derelict at sea!

Yet my brothers are you all.
Some fond sons and husbands too.
And I dream I hear a call,
Full of anguish, come from you.

If, instead of vengeance cold,
We'd adopt the Saviour's plan, —
Showing grace and love untold,—
Could we recreate the *man*?

But were you to evil led,
Quite apart from outer cause?
Has our guilty nation fed
Beasts that caught you in their jaws?

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Have we done to you a harm?
Was the State a partner to
The crime that, they said, your arm
Brought imprisonment to you?

Would the flowers and the birds,
And our love instead of hate,
Or our songs and tender words,
Your hard heart regenerate?

.

And I wonder—who can tell?—
When the saints have long been blest,
If the Christ will send to Hell,
And revive each barren breast.

After age on age has run,
Will the angels then restore
Ev'ry long-lost mother's son
To the fold for evermore?

The Vernon Fire

(August 17, 1909.)

*The Author was an eye-witness of this awful
catastrophe.*

WHAT'S that flick'ring, flashing flame?
Some playful boys making game?
Bonfire? woodpile? weeds, I guess.
Is't a building in distress?

Seems to me I heard a crash
Like a burst of window sash,
Don't you hear those dreadful roars
Like the breaking in of doors?

It's the Okanagan Inn,
Why don't the firemen begin?
Hear the chimneys tumbling down,
How the blaze lights up the town!

Oh! the flames! how high they race!
Are there people in that place?
I dread a fire in the night,
This will be a desp'rate fight.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Look! see those children calling?
The roof is falling—falling!
Can't a ladder reach that high?
Must those helpless creatures die?

Who was that burst through the smoke?
Through the flames again he's broke.
Saved the girl? Heaven bless him!
Now he's after little Jim.

Ha! he has him! See them grope.
Look! he's feeling for a rope.
Catch him, firemen—child and all.
Be quick! Don't you see that wall?

Grab the man, he is scorching,
Stop him from further searching,
He's got the thirst of rescue,
To save is that man's virtue.

He caught that cry of terror.
"I'll die or I will save her,"
Rang his answer, wild and shrill,
To the highest window sill.

He's reached the second landing,
And the brave fellow's handing
Down the trembling, frantic maid
From the upper balustrade.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Oh! see! he smothers, staggers,
He's feeling for your ladders,
Can't you reach him through the flame?
Someone call him. What's his name?

There they plunge—walls and timbers,
Down through that sea of cinders,
In the gulf of fiery breath
That brave fellow's hurled to death.

Three young souls their lives retain
By the brav'ry of that swain.
And in honor of his deeds
All the city should wear weeds.

Was there any other life
Left to perish in that strife?
Couldn't water quench that blaze?
What's that makes the people gaze?

God of Mercy! what are those?
Roasted in their bedding clothes?
Embers of eleven souls
Raked from out that heap of coals?

That's a sight to clog your veins,
Quilts all soaked in crimson stains.
From the bones the flesh's slipping,
From the limbs the blood's dripping.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

THE FUNERAL.

Up the street the cortege swept,
Grey-haired men and maidens wept,
For a sadness like a spell
On the great procession fell.

Soft was played the March in Saul,
We were mourners one and all;
But we cherished brighter thoughts,
When the band struck Isaac Watts'

“O God! our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!

“Under the shadow of Thy throne,
Still may we dwell secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.”

In beds of boughs we laid them,
The fun'ral words were solemn.
Ten black caskets all abreast,
Side by side were laid to rest.

People on the hills around
Will enquire about that mound.
Fathers, sons, from sire to sire
Will relate that tragic fire.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Many friends will don the black
For the lads they 'xpected back;
And lone mothers long will fret
For the sons they can't forget.

Nearly all in that lone grave
Came from o'er the ocean's wave,
And they'll break far distant sod
At the trumpet call of God.

IN MEMORIAM.

There are heroes of empire,
There are heroes of the sea,
But the man who faces fire
Is the bravest of the three.

There are men who'll dare for gold,
And some would die for mothers.
Some for honor will be bold,
But Archie died for others.

Three lives he saved from burning
In the Okanagan flame.
And Vernon should do something
To commemorate his name.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Here we raise this modest fount,*
With water ever trickling,
And the only name we'll mount
Is that of Archie Hickling.

*A public fountain was erected in his honor by the city in September.

Where Do the Swallows Go?

WHEN leaves and meadows turn to brown,
And chestnut burs come tumbling down;
When shocks of corn stand in the row,
Where, O where, do the swallows go?

When autumn winds go moaning by,
And dark grey clouds drift o'er the sky;
When truant leaves get mixed with snow,
Where, O where, do the swallows go?

When battered ships are in the lea,
And hoary frosts inswathe the tree;
When clover leaves are lying low,
Where, O where, do the swallows go?

Who sounds the bugle in the sky,
And tells them when and where to fly?
Who bids them start? How do they know?
Where, O where, do the swallows go?

What pilot guides this wand'ring tribe?
What signals are there to describe
The place perennial pansies grow?
Where, O where, do the swallows go?

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

Is there a land of radiant morn
Beyond the cotton fields and corn,
With neither frost nor drifting snow?
And is that where the swallows go?

Is there no place beyond the sky
Where *I* can migrate by and by?
There is a place, I feel, I know
It's *farther* than the swallows go.

Some day a call will issue forth
To leave our hamlets of the North,
And we'll desert these realms below
For climes where swallows never go.

The Immigrant

AWAY in cold Galicia,
And mild, sunlit Italia,
 Are souls galore,
Now gath'ring up their stock-in-trade
Of shawls and caps and boots—hand-made,
 Bound for our shore.

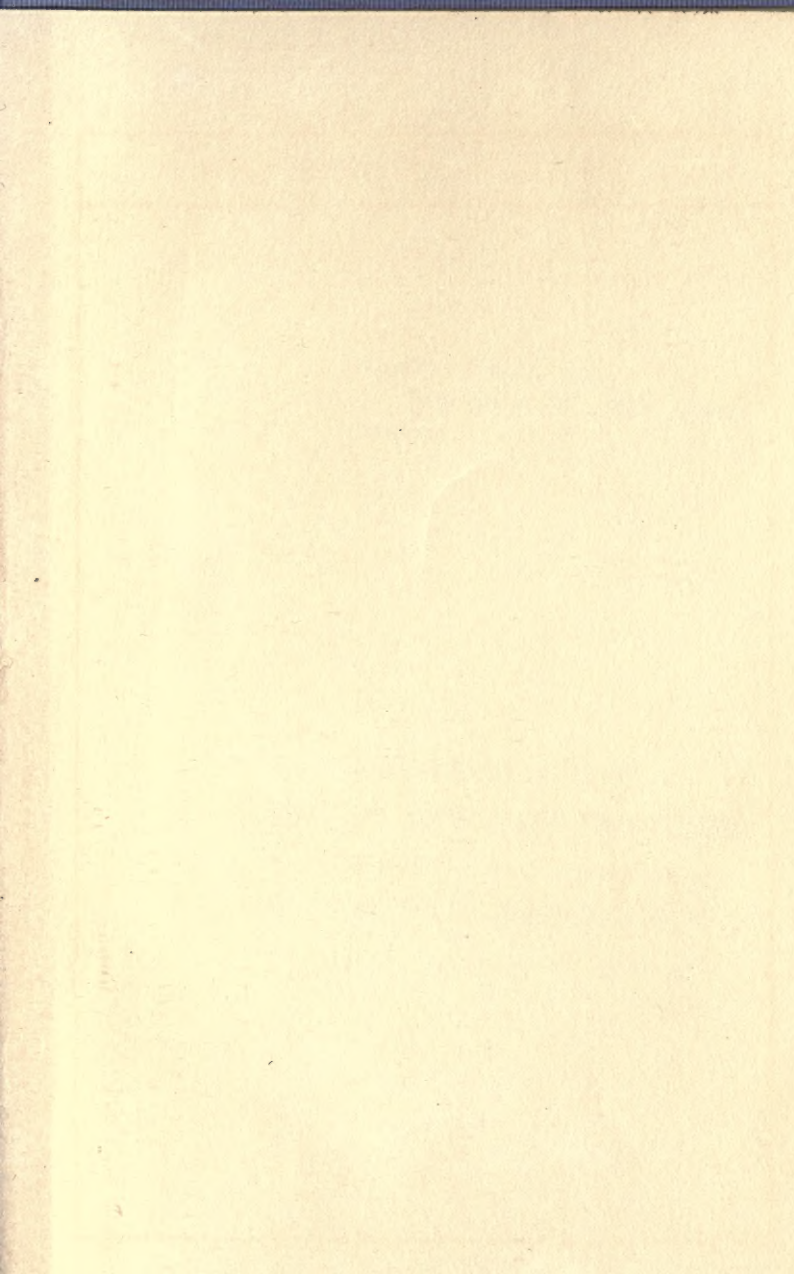
With boxes, sacks—a musty heap,
And coats of lamb or dog or sheep,
 And parting strains,
They're leaving lands of tongue and birth,
For our rich regions of the earth,
 And boarding trains.

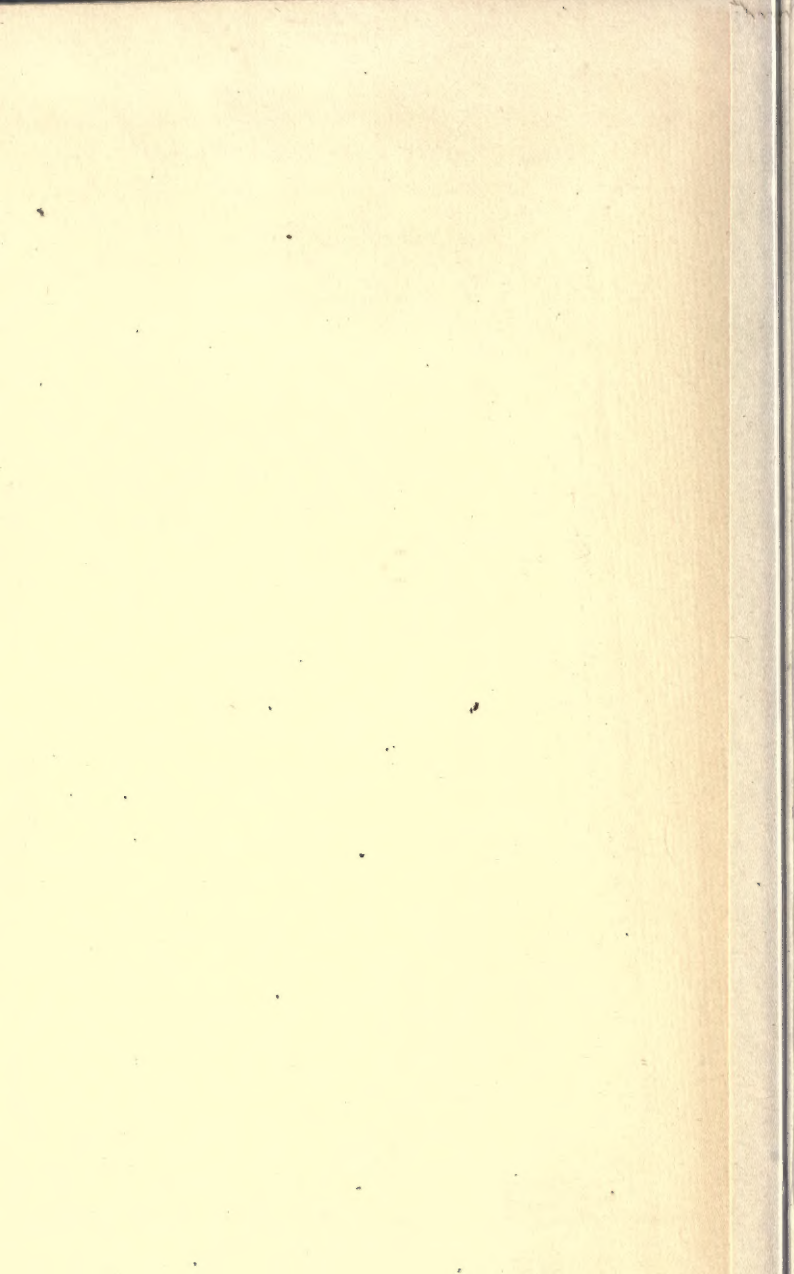
Soon o'er the sea, packed like sardines,
Both old and young and those in teens—
 A motley band—
Will come with strength, and spirit bold,
With lots of grime, but little gold,
 To take our land.

Ah! yes, and there will be a few,
With some cold cash and culture, too,
 Of Britain's best;
They'll bring good blood and loyal heart:
Let's treat them well; they'll do their part
 To lift the rest.

THE VETERAN AND OTHER POEMS

O God of grace! save us the while,
Lest we our neighbors, too, beguile
 With lust of gold;
Look down upon our whole domain,
The kingdom of Thy Son maintain,
 As when of old.





E.M. 24-7-67

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Wigle, Hamilton
The veteran, and other
poems

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